(d) and (e) Further steps taken to assist farmsers of Andhra Pradesh by the Tobacco Board include :—

(i) Recommending construction of any new barn only as a "low profile barn" developed by C.T.R.I. which saves about 15% of fuel;

(ii) Popularising usage of alternative fuels i.e. briquettes made up of agricultural waste like paddy husk, ground nut shells etc. to minimise the usage of wood fuel;

(iii) Conducting demonstration trials for fuel conservation studies like use of paddy straw as insulation material for low cost barn insulation, mud plastering of roof of barn for preventing heat loss, use of alternative fuels like gas etc. and development of cost effective solar barns.

Tobacco Stocks with STC

2480. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be Pleased to state :

(a) whether STC is holding any tobacco stocks presently ;

(b) if so, the quantum of virginia tobacco stocks, with STC;

(c) the quantity of Andhra Pradesh Tobacco presently held by STC;

(d) whether any market has been found for such stocks; and

(e) the details of steps taken to locate new international markets for tobacco grown in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) STC is currently holding a quantity of approx. 3.5 Million Kgs. of Virginia tobacco of Andhra Pradesh.

(d) and (e) Efforts are on to find new markets for export of tobacco from Andhra Pradesh. A delegation of 6 members recently visited Libya, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria in February, 2000 to promote Indian tobacco exports. Another Indian tobacco trade delegation including an STC representative, visited Russia to explore opportunities for tobacco export.

Decrease in Import Items

2481. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) Whether Government have a proposal to decrease the import items;

(b) if so, the steps taken in that direction during the last three years ; and

(c) the details of Government proposals for increasing the export from our country during the current financial year ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) As part of the economic liberalisation programme of the Government and also in terms of our international obligations, import restrictions are being removed. However, all imports are subject to applicable rates of Customs Duty, which should provide adequate protection to the domestic industry.

In the revised Exim Policy (RE-2000/1997-2002) notified on 31-3-2000, Government has taken various measures to promote exports. These include setting up Special Economic Zones, rationalisation of existing export promotion schemes (EPCG) and Duty Exemption/Remission Schemes), encouragement to export of quality/branded goods, procedural simplifications, de-centralisation in decision making and reduction of interface between exporters and Government organisations through the facility of electronic filing of applications at some port offices etc. All these steps are aimed at making Indian exports competitive by reducing transaction costs and time.

Setting up of a Heavy Industry in Assam

2482. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA :Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) Whether Government propose to set up a heavy industry in the State of Assam under the Liberalisation Policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what is the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) to (d) Under the liberalised industrial policy setting up of industries including heavy industries depends upon the commercial judgment of the enterpreneurs which, in turn, is based on the initiative taken by the State Governments/UTs in the creation of conducive economic environment by way of providing basic infrastructural facilities and other incentives. Central Government supplements there efforts to the extent possible.

However, during the Ninth Plan period, there is no proposal for setting up any greenfield heavy industrial unit in the central Sector including the State of Assam.